



SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES SERVICES LIMITED

# Internal Scrutiny Annual Report

## Stanton Bridge Primary School

*Prepared by Nigel Smith for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023*

## Introduction

Internal Control visits were undertaken at Stanton Bridge Primary School ('the Academy') in accordance with the Service Level Agreement between drb Schools & Academies Services Ltd and Stanton Bridge Primary School.

The reviews have been undertaken to provide an independent assurance report to the Academy's Trustee Board and Finance/Audit Committee on the adequacy and effectiveness of the financial controls operating within the Academy in accordance with the requirements contained in the Academy Trust Handbook (formerly Academies Financial Handbook).

Where issues or omissions in the system of internal control were identified, we included recommendations for improvements in our reports.

The reports provide the Board, Governors, Audit Committee and Finance Committee with limited assurance that the following issues have been complied with:

- The financial responsibilities of the Governing Body/Directors are being properly discharged.
- Resources are managed in an efficient, economical, and effective manner.
- Sound systems of Internal Control are being maintained.
- Financial considerations are fully considered in reaching decisions.

We emphasize that it is the Trust Board / Academy's responsibility to ensure recommendations are acted upon in a timely manner and any changes should be monitored to ensure they are effective in improving the Academy's financial resources.

Any recommendations raised in the reports are followed up on the next visit, usually scheduled for the next term. Any items identified which pose a significant risk should be implemented as a matter of priority.

## Schedule of Visits: 2022/23

Name of Academy / MAT	Autumn	Spring	Summer
Stanton Bridge Primary School	14/12/22	16/03/23	20/07/23

## Financial Management

The Internal Control testing covers the following areas:

### *Purchases*

Five payments made within the period are selected to ensure:

- The payment is correctly authorised.
- The payment is correctly authorised in the accounting system.
- The invoice is correctly authorised.
- The invoice agrees to the order.
- That goods or services have been certified as received.
- The order is correctly authorised.
- That the order has been placed with an appropriate supplier.

### *Contracts*

Details of any contracts with a value over a prescribed limit are obtained and the documentation reviewed to ensure that the correct quotation/tender procedures have been followed.

### *Capital Expenditure*

Progress against any significant capital contracts is reviewed to ensure payments are appropriate and the progress of the project is satisfactory.

### *Funding Reconciliation*

Review the receipts from the ESFA and LA checking the amounts agree with the source documentation before tracing onto the Finance system.

### *Income*

Select receipts and ensure money is banked promptly and in full, ensuring monies are recorded correctly in the accounting system. For those academies with cashless arrangements, settlement statements are checked with supporting information.

### *Payroll*

- Five employees from the payroll are selected and the salary details will be checked back to personnel records to confirm that the amount paid is correct.
- Five amendments to the payroll are checked to ensure that appropriately authorised source documentation exists.
- The final payroll print for one month is reviewed to ensure that it has been appropriately authorised.

### *Accounting Systems*

- Bank reconciliations are reviewed to ensure that they have been correctly prepared and authorised.
- Control account reconciliations are reviewed to ensure that they have been correctly prepared and authorised.
- The procedures used to prepare financial reports issued to Governors and Officers, and ESFA are reviewed through sample checks to be satisfied that they are completed accurately and promptly.
- The Internal Control Officer checks the function of reports and budget monitoring reports.

## Reports and Returns

Review the latest reports submitted to the ESFA and Governors and agree to source documentation.

## Governance

A reminder of the key governance issues with notes on how the academy or MAT/MAC is showing compliance on these matters.

# Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The following is a summary of the key findings and recommendations arising in the academic year 2022-23.

### Autumn-22 Term

Finding	Recommendation	Implications	Management Response
<p><b>6.</b> Coventry City Council had served notice on the school to end the contract for Payroll &amp; Pension services on 31/03/23 as they no longer had sufficient resources to provide this service. A shortlist of companies had been reviewed by the Trustees and questions had been asked by the prospective providers. A decision on the new payroll provider would be made on 15th December. The implementation of the new payroll would be scheduled for January 2023 with a parallel payroll run carried out in March to compare output with CCC. It was confirmed that pensions will transfer from Annette Mahoney (CCC) when the move occurs. HR360 provide the HR support and the advisor is Jason Bratt</p>	<p>It is essentially recommended that the output from this exercise is received by Elaine Kent at Stanton Bridge to conduct a thorough check.</p>	<p>The record for each member of staff should represent their current contractual position to prevent any errors on the initial 'live' run. The new payroll would then 'go live' from April 2023.</p>	<p>Stanton Bridge moved to Data Plan as their payroll provider on 01/04/23.</p>

**Spring-23 Term**

Finding	Recommendation	Implications	Management Response
No Recommendations.			

**Summer-23 Term**

Finding	Recommendation	Implications	Management Response
No Recommendations			

## Executive Summary

The Growth Multi-Academy Trust (formerly Stanton Bridge MAT) was established on 09/11/22 to transform the life chances of children and young people across the Midlands. The Trust seeks to develop a culture of providing education of the highest quality; robust financial management and effective governance, ensuring that all children and young people receive the best possible start to life.

During the year the School Business Manager left the school and an Operations Manager supported by an Office Administrator were appointed.

A review was to take place over the summer where a job description would be drafted in relation to the SBM responsibilities contained in the Stanton Bridge Finance Policy and Procedures.

The bank mandate had been amended to reflect the departure of the SBM.

The Finance Consultant is monitoring agency supply, and some contracts would be offered after successful agency placements.

The Operations Manager confirmed that it was intended to review the Schedule of Contracts to extract the current 'live' agreements and set up a new simplified working document.

Coventry City Council served notice on the school to end the contract for Payroll & Pensions Services on 31/03/23 as they no longer had sufficient resources to provide the service.

Stanton Bridge moved to Data Plan as their payroll provider from 01/04/23.

The Data Plan system covers payroll, pensions, and fully managed HR administration. It will also be used for the recording of DBS and Occupational Health records.

Data Plan use software called VERA (Virtual Employee Resource Area). The employees can log-in for electronic access to payslips and P60's as well as updating current email addresses. VERA is a secure site for uploading new starters and contractual amendments.

Good lead support had been provided on the introduction of the new payroll and separate main contacts have been established for Salary, Pension or HR enquiries.

The RPA arrangements were reviewed and following a webinar with the DfE the recommendation was to stay with the RPA. For cyber cover the academy has registered with the police and the flow of emails is monitored by the IT technicians.

It was also confirmed that cyber security training had been conducted for staff.

The energy supply has been discussed and the school decided to remain with the Local Authority using the ESPO Framework based on government recommendations. With more members using the framework there is a degree of protection against expected severe price increases.

The Pupil Premium Strategy Statement and Sports Premium Plan are both published to the website.

Every week the HT is provided with a full General Ledger Cost Centre Summary giving details of Allocated Commitments, Actual Balance, Spent % together with a Balances and Reserves report. These reports are duly signed off by the Head teacher.

## **Policies**

Evidence was seen in the minutes that all the key policies were circulated prior to the Trustee Meeting and were then subsequently approved.

## **Risk Management**

The board of trustees has reviewed the key risks to which the academy trust is exposed together with the operating, financial and compliance controls that have been implemented to mitigate these risks. The board of trustees is of the view that there is a formal on-going process for identifying, evaluating, and managing the academy trust's significant risks. This process is regularly reviewed by the board of trustees.

## **Safeguarding**

An agreement with CPOMS for data sharing connected with safeguarding pupils had now been established.

It was reported that KCSIE (Keeping Children Safe in Education) operate a Single Central Record facility which will be considered at Stanton Bridge.

## **Health & Safety**

As a responsible employer the Governing Body of Stanton Bridge Primary School honour their legal obligations, in particular the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and associated regulations and codes of practice.

The Governing Body recognises and accepts its responsibilities and duties as the employer to conduct its operations in a manner which protects the health and safety and welfare of employees, students and visitors so far as is reasonably practicable.

In compliance with the management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, risk assessments are undertaken, and arrangements are made, where significant risks are identified, for any necessary preventative and protective measures to be put in place as far as is reasonably practicable using a sensible risk management approach.

It is understood that all of Stanton Bridge Primary School employees have a duty of responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves and others and to co-operate to ensure statutory duties and obligations are fulfilled.

### **Estates Management**

#### **Library**

Stanton Bridge were looking to develop Surestart as a library.

It was reported that work had started on the library and a quote had been received for the manual work. Specialist artwork was being carried out to enhance the appearance of the library and the air-conditioning was being changed to have a hot and cold fan with electrical works to be carried out on 19/12/22.

#### **Energy Efficiency**

It was previously reported that Stanton Bridge were looking at the installation of LED lighting to maximise efficiency and reduce energy costs. Coventry City Council have quoted for LED lighting across the whole school. The project would assist in reducing the carbon footprint of the school.

The Government were encouraging de-carbonisation projects and a surveyor's report was awaited. Any recommendation may come with funding attached. It was noted that improvements may be structural as insulation may improve the carbon footprint.

## Emerging issues for the Academic Year 2023-24

- Affordability of National Pay awards that are unfunded by the Government.
- Energy agreements and surge in costs.
- Nursery Numbers



**Signed**

**Date** 29/11/23

Nigel Smith on behalf of **drb Schools and Academies Services Ltd**